

CULTURE AND INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

CULTURE AND INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL, by Major Bhumi B. Baral, 84 pages.

This research discusses how the reluctance to change culture is affecting the internal peace and stability of Nepal. The Nepali culture, despite undergoing some changes, still has discriminatory practices with respect to caste, gender, and ethnicity. The series of political changes the country experienced could not bring about changes in the society; and various regimes somehow supported the discriminatory practices.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a common garden for people of four castes and thirty six sub castes.
— Prithvi Narayan Shah

The Problem

Nepal, a Hindu kingdom for about two and a half centuries, ruled predominately by high caste Hindu elites of the Hills, has been transformed into a secular federal republic. Prior to the transition, the country, despite remaining mostly peaceful, went through different levels of conflicts. The biggest conflict was the Maoist movement (1996-2006) that claimed the lives of approximately 16,000 people. The movement greatly affected the ethnic and regional dynamics of the country. Nepal is currently in a phase of fluid transition. The federal structure of the country could not be delineated, and without promulgating the constitution, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved after its term expired on 28 May 2012. Now, voices for ethnic and regional autonomy have been louder than ever before. Culture, is now not only a major factor discussed in connection with restructuring the state, but is also a long-term concern for the overall peace and stability of Nepal. The cultural issues, especially with respect to caste, gender, and ethnicity, have been the major cause of conflicts in the past. Nepal has witnessed some cultural change, but it is too early to say that there is no discriminatory culture in Nepal. At this time of transition, if cultural issues are not handled properly, the country might face catastrophic consequences. Therefore, an endeavor to describe some sort of relationship between culture and internal security is of great importance.

Research Questions

The study assesses: Does the reluctance of Nepalese society to change its culture (especially with respect to caste, gender, and ethnicity) affect internal peace and security? In order to arrive at a detailed analysis and to find a viable response, three secondary questions are proposed: (1) How were the cultural values supported through different governments? (2) What major incidents and issues highlight the reluctance of Nepalese society to change its culture? (3) What are the impacts of the events with regards to Nepal's cultural values and the potential for conflict in the future?

Scope and Limitations

The culture itself is a very broad discipline. There are more than 800 definitions of culture used by anthropologists. The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share, and transmit from generation to generation in a non-biological fashion.¹ The above mentioned definition of culture will be the main basis for the study. The study primarily focuses on the traditions of continued discrimination and oppression of people on the basis of gender, caste, and ethnicity. This study will also discuss cultural practices such as: wish for a *jagir* (salaried job), *chakari* (unhealthy service), *afno manchhe* (our people) and *karma* (belief in fatalism, belief that the things are pre-designed by the super natural power). The study will cover the time period from the unification of Nepal in 1770, to the present time, 2012.

Delimitations

The study will not examine in detail the culture of every cast, religion or ethnic group. A detailed study of conflict outside Nepal is not included, though some relevant issues such as ethnic conflict in Burundi and Rwanda are considered and included.

Significance

Predominantly a Hindu country, Nepal was tolerant of other religions but did not provide space for their promotion. The Hindu elites from upper caste and urban areas ruled the mostly rural country, oppressing women, *dalits*, and indigenous ethnic groups for two and a half centuries. The political and social changes in the country have brought about awareness in people. Thus, every ethnicity and region now clamor for their rights and access to a decision making role. The indigenous ethnic groups are seeking autonomy and the Madhesh, southern part of Nepal, still feel excluded by the central authority. Now, any wrong move by the state with respect to a specific ethnicity could invite serious problems in the internal security of the country. Today, there is a need to understand the potential risk in the integration of the country, and to look for the opportunities for living in harmony amidst diversity. This topic is of great interest to the people who are concerned with Nepalis culture, are seeking conflict resolution, and are working for the empowerment of women, *dalits*, and indigenous ethnic groups.

Background

Nepal is a small mountainous country in South Asia, amidst two emerging powers and two large ancient civilizations of the world, China and India. Geographically, the country is divided into three east-west ecological zones: the Northern Range-Mountain,

as high as 8,848 meters; the Mid-Range-Hill; and the Southern Range–Terai (flat land), as low as 70 meters. The country, roughly rectangular in shape, stretches from east to west with a mean length of 885 km. and an average width north to south of 193 km. The population of the country, with an area of 147,181 square km., as of 22 June 2011, stands at 26.6 million with an annual average growth of 1.40 percent. The population density of the country is 181 per square km. Kathmandu district has the highest density (4,408) and Manang has the lowest (3). The Tarai region constitutes 50.15 percent of the population while the Hill area constitutes 43.1 percent. The remaining 6.75 percent live in the mountainous region. Most of the population lives in rural areas with subsistence farming, and only 17 percent (4.5 million) of the total population reside in urban areas.² Per capita Gross Domestic Product is 562 United States' dollar, with 3.53 percent economic growth measured by Gross Domestic Product. A Nepal Living Survey in 2003-2004, shows nearly one-third of the population (30.8 percent) is living below the poverty line, and the Ginni coefficient, which indicates inequality between the poor and rich, is 41.4. The literacy rate of the country as of 2001 was just 54.1 percent, which comprises 65.5 percent male and 42.8 percent female.³ There is a great difference, within the country, in terms of climate, topography, and culture between the moonlike mountains in the north bordering China and the steaming jungles down by the Indian border, as it exists between Norway to Sicily.⁴

Nepal figures prominently in several of the ancient Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, suggesting that the central Himalayas had a close relationship with the Indo-Aryan societies of northern India since ancient times.⁵

Vamshavalis, the Royal chronicles, trace an unbroken line of Kings over 4,000 years.⁶

The coherent dynastic history of Nepal Valley (name for present day Kathmandu valley) however, still with much ambiguity, becomes evident only with the rise of the Lichhavi Dynasty around the fourth century. In the sixteenth century, what is now known as Nepal, was divided into some 50 small Rajput-ruled principalities, as well as several decentralized tribal policies that were either independent or in control of one of the Rajput principalities.

The history of the nation-state of Nepal is generally traced back to 1768-1769 when Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ruler of Gorkha, one of the small kingdoms in central Nepal, completed the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley. By the time the king died in 1775, the kingdom of Gorkha had annexed nearly the entire eastern half of present day Nepal. The descendants of Prithvi Narayan Shah continued the expansion of the country, and after four decades the Gorkhalis reached as far as Tista in the east and Kangra in the west. The Treaty of Sugauli, signed in 1816, between Nepal and East India Company basically confined Nepal to its present boundaries.

The end of external conflict led to intensified internal rivalry and violence among the *Bhardars* (courtiers) for the post of Prime Minister and other Ministers. The situation became chaotic and unpredictable. The infamous violent incident of 15 September 1846 brought Jung Bahadur to absolute power. The royal decree then went into the hands of Ranas. The Ranas, who ruled Nepal for over a century, turned Shah Kings into puppets. During their rule, the country experienced serious social setbacks as ordinary citizens had no right to education or major position, and any ordinary citizen that showed extraordinary talents was executed. This period is a black spot in the history of Nepal. Somehow, in the mid-20th century, the people and the King were able to regain power by

ending 104 years of Rana oligarchy. After that the Kings had power in absolute and constitutional form until Nepal officially became a federal republic through a legislative bill on 28 May 2008.

The student movement in the late 1970s compelled the King to announce a referendum with two choices: (1) a reformed Panchayat, for the existing political system, and (2) a multiparty democracy. The multiparty democracy option was defeated. Within a decade, the country witnessed another upheaval which forced the King to concede more power to the people by becoming a constitutional monarch. This move however, did not improve the situation in Nepal. The country, after half a decade or so into multiparty democracy, merely witnessed a deadly Maoist insurgency which claimed the life of more than 16,000 people. Today, even after the entry of the Maoists into mainstream politics, ethnic violence of a criminal nature continues in the country. The number of ethnic and religious organizations is on the rise and they are becoming more politically active.

The Practices in Society

Some typical behaviors of the Nepalese people cited in this study, are basically those practices described in the book, *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernization*, by Nepal's best-known anthropologist, social scientist and activist Dor Bahadur Bista. When writing about Nepal, he is cited and referred to widely by native and foreign writers. Every Nepali tries to have a *jagir*, a salaried job, where one does not necessarily have to actually work, but will receive a payment at the end of each month.⁷ This can be traced back to the prevailing caste system being practiced in Nepal. This caste system pervades primarily in the elites who feel they are superior to the majority of the population. The elite follow the non-work ideals of the Brahman. The Brahmins do

not do any physical work but still live a prosperous life on *dan*, the charity of others. *Jagir*, therefore, exists not for serving people but to simply pass time and wait for the sun to set, popularly known amongst the Nepalese as, *Raja ko kam kaile jala gham*. A person with a *Jagair*, however, holds an important position in the Nepalese social structures. Parents would never hesitate to arrange their daughter's marriage with someone possessing *jagir*.

The *chakari*, unhealthy service, is another custom that serves to ensure job security and eligibility for further promotion in contrast to the norms of a meritocracy.⁸ *Chakari* is a vertical relationship complemented on a horizontal axis by a proscribed gathering with *afno manchhe*, or common people.⁹ A strong distinction is made between “we” and “others.” In Nepal, high caste, advanced education, higher economic status, and identification with the countries' Hill culture have traditionally been essential prerequisites for entering into the government power structure. Two Hill communities, Brahmins, and Kshatriyas, and to some extent, the Newars of the Katmandu Valley, have traditionally fulfilled these prerequisites; and thus have been dominant in the Nepalese society. The other important feature in the Nepali value system is fatalism, *karma*, the belief that no one has personal control over one's life but that one's destiny is determined by a powerful external force.¹⁰ This original Hindu belief in *karma*, written on an individual's forehead on the sixth day after birth means nothing could alter one's fate. Therefore, the descendants have been learning reliance and despotism in their family and have been putting it into practice outside their families.¹¹

Practice of the values mentioned meant that the *dalits* and women had to live with suppression because of their individual *karma*. The indigenous population and the people

of Terai were left behind because they did not belong to the core group of *afno manche*. Furthermore, the people in the Hills continued to distrust the people of the Terai. Language was another factor that made Madhesi people living in Terai, and indigenous ethnic communities in the Hills less competitive and continued to be a major hurdle to getting a good job or a position in the government.

The Nepalese Culture

Nepal is a country with a very rich culture. It is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country where the culture of people differs from place to place. In this paper the major ethnic groups are enumerated by percentage, language and religion. The ethnic aspects of Nepal has affected the regionalism in the country and undermined the role of women and *dalits*. Politics in Nepal have been part and parcel of Nepali culture, and corruption is somewhat inborn in this culture.

Ethnic Groups

The ethnic identity of the Nepali citizen becomes apparent from their dress, language, habits, and facial features. The ethnic identity has been a major determining factor for family and other issues such as one's choice of a marriage partner, friends, and job opportunities.¹² The culture of Nepal can be better understood in terms of ethnicity and different regions of the country where people live.

The inhabitants of Nepal can be broadly classified into three main ethnic groups: The Indo-Aryans, the Mongoloids, and the Austro-Asiatic. The people speaking various languages and dialects of the Sanskrit origin migrated from India to Nepal at different points of time are Indo-Aryans. They soon became part of Nepali society. The top in

caste hierarchy of this group are the Hill Brahmans and the Kshatriyas. They are basically settled in the rice growing areas in both the Hill and Terai regions of the country. They are counted among the local elites who have been dominating the major political and administrative institutions in Nepal. There also exists a dozen small, untouchable occupational caste groups like cobblers (*sarki*) and tailors (*damai*) scattered in various places in the Hills. The people of Mongoloid origin such as Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Sunwar, Gurung, magar, Kirati, Bhote, Sherpa, Chepang, Thakali, etcetera, are settled in the Himalayan and Hill regions. These people speak Tibeto Burman languages, have Mangolian features, and their religious belief is primarily influenced by Buddhism. They are believed to have migrated to Nepal from the north, and their culture and life style are quite similar to the people in Tibet. The Newars, the earliest known arrivals and most accomplished artisans and merchants in Nepal, have been living mostly in the Kathmandu valley and other traditional trade towns. The people of Austro Asiatic origin are Sutar, Dura, Dunwar, Rawate, Santhali etcetera. The people of this origin mostly live in rural and jungle areas. Table 1 shows the population of 10 major ethnic and cast groups in Nepal. The Indo Aryans have been dominant in Nepal. The other ethnic groups, who are relatively early settlers in Nepal, have been complaining about the high caste Hindus practicing their cultural hegemony, Nepal's continuation as a Hindu state (now a secular state), perpetuation of Bahunvad (Brahminism), and domination of Brahmins and Chettris in the political and administrative structures of the country. They have additionally been complaining about faulty census procedures claiming that they have reduced their numerical strength. They demand support for their distinct cultural identity and question the economic backwardness of their ethnic groups.¹³

Table 1. Population by Caste/Ethnicity	
Ethnic/Caste Group	%
Chhetri	15.80
Bahun	12.74
Magar	7.14
Tharu	6.75
Tamang	5.64
Newar	5.48
Muslim	4.27
Kami	3.94
Yadav	3.94
Rai	2.79

Source: Nishchal N. Pandey, *New Nepal, the Fault Lines* (California: Sage Publications, 2010), 46.

It is noteworthy that the Mongolian ethnic group, with their broad features, stocky build, and fiercely martial traditions, have been providing recruits for the world famous Gurkha regiments.¹⁴ Nepali, the national language, is not the first language of the majority of the population of Nepal, and many people find it difficult to speak clearly. Table 2 shows the percent of people by language.

Table 2. Population by Language (in percent), 2001		
S.N	Language	Percent
1	Nepali	48.61
2	Maithili	12.30
3	Bhojpuri	7.53
4	Tharu	5.86
5	Tamang	5.19
6	Newar	3.63
7	Magar	3.39
8	Awadhi	2.47
9	Bantawa	1.63
10	Gurung	1.49
11	Limbu	1.47
12	Bajjika	1.05
13	Others	5.38

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, “Preliminary Result of National Population Census 2011 Released,” 10 December 2011, <http://www.cbs.gov.np/> (accessed 12 April 2012).

The major religion of the country is Hinduism followed by Buddhism, Islam, Kirat, and Christian. The number of Hindu population is decreasing each year and the number of Buddhist, and Christian population is on rise. Because of the strict discriminatory practice in Hinduism, lower caste people have been attracted to other religions such as Christianity. Table 3 shows the percent of population by religion.

Table 3. Population by Religion(in percent), 2001		
S.N	Religion	Percent
1	Hindu	80.62
2	Buddhist	10.4
3	Islam	4.20
4	Kirat	3.60
5	Christian	0.45
6	Others	0.39

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, “Preliminary Result of National Population Census 2011 Released,” 10 December 2011, <http://www.cbs.gov.np/> (accessed 12 April 2012).

Regionalism

The people of Terai region have historically been discriminated in Nepal. The Hill people and the ruling elite did not trust them; thus there is significantly low representation of them in administrative and security bodies of the government. During the Panchayat system in 1962, deliberate attempts were made to encourage Nepali in the Terai in place of Hindi, the lingua franca of that region. Migration of the Hill people in the Terai and the consolidation of citizenship rules made it difficult for the people in Terai to obtain citizenship. The people of the Hill region migrating to Terai were given surplus land through introduction of land reforms. The surplus land was denied to the Terai people who had been the tillers of the land for generations.¹⁵

Women

Gender equality is a big challenge in Nepal especially in rural parts of the country. For parents, having a son is considered necessary so that he can take care of them when they are elderly and perform rituals after their death. Families have had dozens of daughters aspiring to have son. Women face discrimination at home such as, sharing the household work, getting to eat, and going to school. The parents feel secure if they find a groom early for their daughters. In the groom's house too, the bride is the lowest priority. She is expected to do every task and eat only after everyone else is finished. Though *sati*, getting burnt with the dead husband, has been eradicated for some time, the widow is still expected to wear some restrictive dress and jewelry, in terms of color and design.

Dalits

Approximately 15 percent of the total population of Nepal constitute the category of *dalits* which is the lowest caste people. The *dalits*, scattered all over the country, are generally illiterate, poor, perform menial jobs, have marginal living conditions, and face social abuses. The *dalits* have been facing various types of discriminations such as social, religious, occupational, and territorial. They fall into the lowest category in the caste hierarchy and are treated in society as untouchables. They are not allowed to enter religious places and perform *puja* (worship). They are to perform menial jobs that are prohibited for the upper caste people and allowed to live in the fringe areas of the urban or rural localities with minimum or no facilities.¹⁶ People in the villages would not even give milk to the *dalits* because of the belief that blood would come instead of milk leading to the death of the buffalo and cow.

Political Culture

For generations, Nepal was ruled under a highly centralized, authoritarian and personalized political system of the Shah Kings and the Rana Prime Ministers. Allegiance to the ruler was a precondition for entering into the power structure. However, for any such allegiance it was necessary that the person belong to higher castes and Hill culture. This gave way to a system of patronage. Dissent or opposition was considered to be a breach of faith and there would be severe punishment. As a result, people lacked self-confidence, openness, security, and consciousness.¹⁷ In Nepal, a process of gradual democratization took place in 1951, but the democratic elite could not neutralize the political role of the traditional elite.¹⁸ Nepal's transition to a more complete democracy and political change in the post -1950 period was marked by conflict between traditional cultural norms and the dynamics of multiparty democracy. Political culture has not been developed in Nepal despite the three democratic experiments in the 1950s, 1990s, and post 2006.

Corruption

Prithivi Narayan Shah stated long ago that, “those who give bribes and those who take bribes are the greatest sinners of Nepal society, even killing them you would not be committing a sin.”¹⁹ This is a clear indication that corruption was inherent in Nepali culture. It is evident that there is a democratization of corruption, and that no transaction is possible, either in or out of government, without a bribe.²⁰ Transparency International, the anti-corruption organization, designated Nepali political parties and police as the most corrupt institutions in Nepal, followed by the Parliament and public offices in third and fourth places respectively.²¹

Summary

The Nepali people have been tolerant and lived in harmony for generations. The country, with multi ethnic and multilingual people, has gone through violent periods. Currently, Nepal is going through a very difficult time of transition. Some Nepalis do not want to lose what they have enjoyed so far, where others want to safeguard what they have achieved because of the political changes. A significant number of Nepali aspire to better opportunities. Despite some democratic practices, no viable political culture has been established and corruption is rampant. Ethnic and religious-based organizations are multiplying. Long-term peace and stability for Nepal is in question.

¹A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), 96.

²Central Bureau of Statistics, "Preliminary Result of National Population Census 2011 Released," 10 December 2011, <http://www.census.gov.np/> (accessed 11 December 2011).

³Ibid.

⁴Jonathan Gregson, *Massacre at the Palace, the Doomed Royal Dynasty of Nepal Talk* (New York: Talk Miramax Books, 2002), 28.

⁵Leo E. Rose and John T. Scholz, *Nepal, Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 11.

⁶Ibid., 4, 8.

⁷Michael Hutt, ed., *Nepal in the Nineties* (New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2001), 106-127.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 5, 71.

¹³B. C. Upreti, *Nepal Democracy at Cross Roads, Post-1990 Dynamics, Issues and Challenges* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2007), 88-97.

¹⁴Ibid., 4, 24.

¹⁵Ibid., 13.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 5.

¹⁸Ibid., 13.

¹⁹Barbara Adams, *Nepal Crisis Unlimited, Reflections from the Crucial Years* (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2006), 25-27.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Nepalnews.com, “Political Parties, Police most Corrupt Institutions: Transparency International Report,” 22 December 2011, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2011/dec/dec22/news11.php/> (accessed 23 December 2011).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The author referred to various books related to culture and conflict. The web sites of the government, political parties, ethnic organizations, human rights activists, non-governmental organizations, and national and foreign journals were also used. Similarly the researcher reviewed several reports of various workshops, seminars, interaction programs, and research works related to ethnicity, conflict, and conflict management. This chapter will analyze some of those books and they will be referred again in chapter 4 during the analysis. The literature is divided broadly into four main groups. The first group, literature prior to 1996, basically tells the history and the prevailing situation of the country at that time. The other two groups of literature, literature during Moist insurgency, and literature after 2006, basically discuss the conflict, causes of conflict, and the impacts of conflict. The final group, additional sources, basically addresses the country's profile and reinforces the knowledge gained in the other three groups of literature.

Literature Pre-1996

Nepal, Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom, written by Leo E. Rose and John T. Scholz and published in 1980, gives the overall picture of the country prior to 1980. The book, through its five chapters, talks about the history, political system, society, economy and the international relations of Nepal from the prehistory time up to 1980. This book provides a broad understanding of the situation in the past. It is a useful source in

understanding how high caste Hindu elites established themselves in the power structure of the country.

Nepal and Bhutan Country Studies, edited by Andrea Matles Savada and published in 1993, also provides the understanding of the prevailing situation of Nepal from sixth century B.C. until the start of the 1990s. The book discusses in detail in its initial 240 pages the history, society, economy, politics and security of the country. The book is a good source for gaining an overall picture of the country in the past. In particular, the book describes in detail the major incidents that took place in Nepal in the past.

Literature during Maoist Insurgency

The book, *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal*, written by Li Onesto and published in 2005, helps in understanding the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal in regards to the insurgent. The first, long-term photo journalist who had unprecedented access deep inside the Maoist held areas such as Rolpa and Rukum brings out first-hand information about the real state of affairs behind the war waged by the Maoists. The book consists of interviews of the political leaders or Maoists, guerilla fighters, villagers in areas under Maoist control, and relatives of those killed by government forces. The book gives insight on the social and economic conditions that fuelled the insurgency. The book also provides an account of how the insurgents, here the Maoists, built their organization; how they took forward their movement; and how they governed their area under their control.

The research paper, “Bombings and Blockades: The Impact of the Maoist Insurgency and the Relationship Between Kathmandu and Its Hinterland,” written by Eileen Aki Marceau and published in 2005, puts forward the theme, “capital–hinterland

clash into a question of spatial meaning.” The author states that Kathmandu, the capital, where the rulers and Nepali elite have lived since the unification of the country, has the infrastructure of a modernized city whereas most of rural Nepal is totally neglected and still in primitive condition. By means of using two major incidents, the bombing in the exotic hotel and the blockade of the capital, the paper shows how the insurgents were exerting pressure on the capital after taking hold of most of the hinterland. The paper helps in understanding the dynamics of conflict by showing how the development of both the capital and the hinterland is important to sustainable peace.

The article, “The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and US Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” written by Timothy R. Kreuttner in *Small War Journal* explains the insurgents adopting Maoists’ strategy of protracted people’s war in Nepal. In the prevailing situation of extreme poverty, economic stagnation, social oppression and a legacy of political turmoil the writer points out the self- serving state body that used repressive military and police operations as the common enemy. The article helps in understanding how the repressive counterinsurgency would not prevail, or would rather deteriorate the situation when core issues of social discrimination, poverty, and exclusion in the decision making role are not addressed. The article points out that the counterinsurgency doctrine should be comprehensive so that it nullifies the grievance borne of discrimination and exclusion. The article explains the potential of insurgency flourishing in the midst of extreme poverty, economic stagnation, social repression, and a legacy of political disorder.

Literature Post-2006

The book, *New Nepal the Fault Lines*, written by Nishchal Nath Pandey and published in 2010, puts forward some fault lines for the prosperous Nepal. The book

praises the achievement made to this point, such as the constituent assembly elections held in 2008, but also cautions about the prevalent challenges that are ahead. The book argues that ethnicity, language, and religion are emerging as clear fault lines of the “New Nepal.” The book suggests that the law and order situation, smooth supply of daily essentials, and immediate economic relief to the rural hinterlands should be the priorities of the nation. This book helps to understand potential risk to the peace and stability of the country.

The book, *Contentious Politics and Democratization in Nepal*, edited by Mahendra Lawoti and published in 2007, clearly displays how different groups have rebelled against the government at various times. The book is very descriptive in the issues of rebellion brought about by ethnic groups, peasants and students. It gives accounts of various rebellions, such as the Limbuwan Rebellion in 1770 in the Far East, and *Nepal Bhasa Manka Khalah* (The Association of Newar Speakers) established in Kathmandu in 1979. The book discusses violence as a means of accomplishing political change in the country. It also elaborates on the exclusion suffered by the society using different illustrations such as the failure of the Anti-untouchability Movement in 1947, the *Dalit* Temple Entry Movement (*Pashupatinath mandir*, Kathmandu, and *Shaileshworri mandir*, Doti in 1954; and *Sidhakali mandir*, Bhojpur in 1965), the *Dashain* boycott in Dhankuta in 1967, and the movement in Terai in 1956 against making Nepali the only language of instruction. The book states that the repression was less severe after 1951 when the Rana regime ended.

The book, *Resistance and the State, Nepalese Experience*, edited by David N. Gellner and published in 2007, discusses the ethnic activism of some groups such as

Magars, Tharu, and Gurungs. The book goes into great detail about the existence, organization, existence and activities of these ethnic groups. It discusses in detail the topics of representation and the politics of Nepal where the issues of democracy and dissent in the country are revealed. This is an excellent source that provides insight on contentious issues such as ethnicity, politics, and resistance to the state.

The article, “Social Change in Conflict–Affected Areas of Nepal,” in *Social Development Notes* of the World Bank points out that the main root of the conflict is the traditional deep-seated political, economic, and social exclusion of the majority of the people based on their cast, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, and region. The article explains how female Maoist guerrillas, one third of the total, were defying Hindu traditions. It also describes how Maoists were garnering the support of *Dalits* (lower cast) and the Indigenous Ethnic Group. However, the article does not agree that poverty is one of the main causes of the conflict because there were other areas in the country which were worse in comparison to the areas where the insurgency started. The article discusses the issues raised by ethnic groups such as ethnic autonomy, the right to self-determination, and decentralized governance. The article also points out that the changes in society which were mostly through the “barrel of the gun” were basically symbolic and are not yet part of the fabric of the society. The article helps in understanding the dynamics of the society after the Maoist conflict and shows some fault lines in the post conflict reconstruction of the country. Thus, it demonstrates that social transformation has to be made sustainable through different policies and practices.

Som Pudasaini authored a paper entitled, “Dynamics of Conflict.” He submitted his paper to the New Dynamics of Development: Challenges and Prospects program

which was organized 12 and 13 November 2008 by the Centre for Economic and Technical Studies in cooperation with Fridrich-Ebert-Stiftung. His paper points out six categories of factors for conflict: identity conflicts; ideological conflicts; conflicts due to exclusion or marginalization from power, governance, and resource use; territorial or inter-state conflicts; hegemonic or strategic conflicts; and civilizational conflicts. The writer states that any conflict is undesirable because loss of life and property is incurred. However, it also offers an opportunity to comprehend the glitches which could be addressed through negotiations. According to the writer, coalition governance culture, inclusive democratic polity, and efficient bureaucracy based on merit are the core issues for peacebuilding and socio-economic progress. This paper is useful in understanding the critical causes and types of conflict. It also demonstrates a methodology which may be used to avert conflict.

The paper, “Towards a Great Transformation? The Maoist Insurgency and Local Perceptions of Social Transformations in Nepal” (July 2010), by Jeevan Raj Sharma and Antonio Donini, points out that many existent social norms and patterns were challenged and many were reconstructed. However, the paper reveals the finding that changes in rural Nepal are more symbolic. The paper shows that there is a great awareness in the social relationship; however, less change in the structural dimensions of human condition. This condition as brought out by the paper is not conducive to sustainable peace and stability. Thus, the paper shows doubt for sustainable peace in the present socio-cultural set up.

The paper, “Social Impact of Armed Conflict in Nepal Cause and Impact,” by Ms. Anjana Shakya and her team, points out political ideology and basic human needs as the

most common root cause of armed conflicts. The writers point to systematic structural violence as the underlying cause for the Maoist conflict. In the paper, the writers show both the negative and positive consequences of the conflict. According to the writers, the armed conflict in Nepal caused immense pain and there was enormous loss of life and property; but it also created opportunities for self- empowerment of women and marginalized communities. The writers are also worried about the negative aspects of Maoist conflict: many people lost their traditional jobs in the name of emancipation from bonded labor; a generation of youths-referred to by the authors as a lost generation- in most parts of the country could not pursue their studies; victims of conflicts are waiting for the right time to retaliate; and above all, people are taking violence as a means to get recognition.

“An Empirical Analysis of the Conflict in Nepal,” the Working Paper Series No 7 of July 2006, by Shahid Parwez analyzes the conflict in general. In his analysis, Shahid makes reference to different works that emphasize the significance of economic factors in the dynamics of conflict. He puts forward two findings, one by Ballantine and Sherman, and the other by Murshe and Gates. The finding by Ballantine and Sherman, states that the grievances act as a catalyst for conflict, where greed for personal economic benefits is a factor associated with the perpetuation and escalation of conflict. The other finding, by Murshe and Gates, shows that grievance itself is the motivating factor for the conflict. Stating the Nepali society is highly diverse, the author argues that a mix of determinants comprising economic and social dimensions should be used to explain the conflict in Nepal. The findings in the paper basically show expectancy, income and road density being inversely proportional to the probability of conflict. This paper clearly shows the

conflict in one place differs in many ways to the conflict in other places. One size fits all neither works in understanding the conflict nor in managing it.

Additional Sources

The book, *Massacre at the Palace, the Doomed Royal Dynasty of Nepal*, written by Jonathan Gregson and published in 2002, does not only clearly discusses the royal massacre of 2001, but also examines the whole Shah dynasty. It explains how chaotic the situation in Nepal was with conspiracies and murders, and how the Kings and Queens reacted. It also depicts the turmoil the country went through during the *Rana* Regime and how the *Ranas* were overthrown. The author discusses the sentiments of the people and the reactions of the Kings in different situations. The book in itself is a complete documentary of the Shah Dynasty in Nepal, and helps to explain cultural aspects prevalent in the country, and in particular, the aristocratic family. The author also helps the readers to understand that the royal family and the local people do not really know anything about each other. The book is truly a miniature history of Nepal. As the title suggests the author deliberately attempts to cover in great detail the infamous royal massacre which led to the killing of 10 members of the royal family. It also touches lightly on the skepticism brought about by the people in regards to the public report by the committee that investigated the royal massacre incident.

The book, *Stories of Peoplehood, the Politics and Morals of Political Membership*, written by Rogers M. Smith and published in 2003, introduces a new term, “peoplehood.” In the book, the author examines the importance of “stories of peoplehood,” accounts that assure economic or political power and define political allegiances in religious, cultural, racial, ethnic and related terms. Different from the

contemporary writings, this book argues for community–building through robust contestation among sharply differing views. The book’s original idea is combined with theories, myths and stories of ancient and recent past from around the world such as Kyrgyzstan and Israel. This book in a broader sense helps to understand how the majority of the people with different ethnicity, language and religion can be left behind by the state as the result of certain notions of nation building.

Summary

A number of authors have written about the culture of Nepal. There are also a plethora of references pertaining to the recent insurgency. These include literature that explains the causes of insurgency and the socio-cultural outcomes of the conflict. There are some articles that cover the cultural violence in Nepal. There are also references which discuss some fault lines in the formation of prosperous Nepal. The researcher, through the available literature on culture and conflict, as an observer, and also from the analysis of the recent events, would make an endeavor to produce a product that better explains the relation of culture to the internal security of Nepal.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the primary and secondary research questions. The researcher used the qualitative method in this study. Qualitative analysis was done using secondary sources and by observing recent events taking place in Nepal.

The qualitative approach of research was used to describe the impact of cultural values on public life, social structure, internal security, and variations in culture as a result of culture change. This research attempted to describe and explain relationships between the cultural values and the various groups of people who practiced them or challenged them. Qualitative research was chosen to guard against incorrect inferences that may result from primarily using a quantitative approach. This method was selected as it facilitates description and analysis of individuals or groups. It should also be noted that the researcher himself was an important part of the process as a participating observer in the field.

The research is descriptive and analytical in nature. The researcher, in order to relate culture with the internal security, analyzed whether or not there was reluctance to cultural changes. Major social issues and violent incidents of the past and present were examined. The goal in doing so was to discern if there was reluctance to make cultural changes and how this impacted the internal security of the country. In order to draw inferences for the internal peace and security of the country in future, there was a review of the present trend of violence, socio-political activities, and the behavior of the ethnic groups.

To avoid ambiguities relating to the primary question the definition of culture used in the research was given. The researcher also specified the cultural practices: the desire for *jagir*, *chakari*, *afno manchhe*, and *karma*.

At the beginning of the analysis, three secondary questions were addressed to assist in the examination of the primary question. The primary question is: Does the reluctance of Nepalese society to change its culture (especially with respect to caste, gender and ethnicity) affect internal peace and security? To answer the first secondary question, “How were the cultural values supported by different governments?” a chronology of important events was analyzed, starting in 1770 when Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the Kathmandu Valley, and ending with the effectiveness of the constitution of 1990 (1990-2005). To better illustrate the different activities practiced, the time period was divided into four segments: initial Shah Regime (1770-1846), Rana Regime (1846-1950), Panchayat Regime (1960-1990), and Constitutional Monarchy (1990-2005).

The initial Shah Regime (1770-1846) was chosen because it was the beginning of the administration of the unified Nepal. Prior to this unification, Nepal existed in over 50 principalities. In 1770 after conquering Kathmandu, King Prithvi Narayan Shah shifted the capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu. Since that time, the high caste Hindu elites have been dominant in the Nepali power structure.

The Rana Regime (1846-1950) is a black spot in the history of Nepal. During this time the hereditary Rana rulers confined the power within their family. Other people outside the Rana family were suppressed. The study of this period demonstrates the ultimate exclusion practiced by the Ranas.

The Panchayat Regime (1960-1999) was the time period during which the party-less political system of indigenous nature was practiced in Nepal. This period exhibits the practice of exclusion of religion other than Hinduism and languages other than Nepali. During this time, some efforts to end caste discrimination were not at all effective as the practices were deeply rooted in Nepali tradition.

The Constitutional Monarchy (1990-2005) marks the period of change from absolute Monarchy to constitutional monarchy. This change was the result of the Peoples Mass Movement. Unfortunately, the aspirations of the people remained unaddressed. Nepal still remained a Hindu Kingdom. The beginning of the Maoist insurgency in 1996 is a clear indication that the situation with respect to caste, gender, and ethnicity had not changed despite the political shifts of 1990.

The second secondary question, “What major incidents and issues that highlight the reluctance of Nepalese society to change its culture?” helped to explore whether or not there is reluctance to cultural change and if that was one of the causes of conflicts. This question, in conjunction with the previous secondary question, seeks to establish some relationship between the culture and the internal security of Nepal. In order to answer this secondary question, major incidents and issues were chosen in such a way that they would reflect the culture within a family, society and the country as a whole. The major incidents and issues analyzed in the study are discussed briefly below.

Major Incidents

Nepal is thought of as a peaceful Shangri-La. The country, however, has gone through different levels of violence since the time it was unified in the late 1700s. Throughout the 1800s, peasant rebellions frequently broke out against authoritarian

regimes. After the Second World War, the discontent of the Nepalese people against the government intensified. The politics of the country changed from time to time, but the culture, the people, and more evidently that of the administrator, did not change.

Therefore, the result was the formation of new forms of government again and again. The study analyzed the major incidents such as Anti-Rana Movement 1950-1951, People's Mass Movement 1990, and Maoist Movement 1996-2006 to examine whether or not the political change could bring about cultural change. The case study of the 'Royal Carnage 2001' which occurred during the midst of Maoist Insurgency was also analyzed to determine if the culture was changing or if there was still reluctance to change.

The Anti-Rana Movement in 1950 was the largest movement against the central government by the people in the history of Nepal. The movement was directed against the authoritarian regime that oppressed the people. The study of this movement shows how a specific section of high caste Hindu elites were using all the resources of the country while the other people were living without even basic needs.

The People's Mass Movement of 1990 was chosen for analysis because it marks the beginning of major ethnic movement in Nepal. The study of this movement shows how certain groups of people, high caste Hindu elites, were still dominant in the power structure of Nepal. The Maoist Movement forms the major portion of the study because it had the highest number of victims in the history of Nepal. Moreover, the logical end to the peace process is yet to happen. The Maoists received popular support because they vowed to make cultural changes, especially with respect to caste, gender, and ethnicity. These issues remain unchanged in most parts of the country.

The Major Issues

An analysis was made of the prevailing situation in major issues such as caste, ethnicity, and gender discrimination. The analysis would show if significant changes have been achieved or if there is still a lot of work to do to eliminate such discrimination. The rise of major political parties, over a period of time, was briefly analyzed to see how and under what conditions, these political parties could garner popular support. The political culture and corruption were also examined as they have been part and parcel of the Nepalese culture.

The Culture and Future of Nepal

The final secondary question, “What are the impacts of the events with regard to Nepal’s cultural values and the potential for conflict in the future?” assisted in determining the outcome of different events discussed in the previous secondary question. Some inferences would be provided through examination of the outcomes and analyzing their relation to the prevailing political situation and existing environment of caste, gender, and ethnicity. To some extent, these inferences would be useful in predicting the Nepali security situation in the future

Summary

Qualitative analysis was accomplished using secondary sources, and by personal observation of events taking place in Nepal. Major cultural issues and the major incidents since the unification of Nepal in 1770, to present day, May 2012, were analyzed to relate culture to internal security of Nepal

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Government Support for Cultural Values

Nepal was a relatively peaceful country where people of different ethnic backgrounds lived in harmony. The cases of thefts and murders were rarely heard of. This is substantiated by the foreign travelers like Megasthenes and Fa Hien who commented that, “Hindus are simple, intelligent, and honest people who do not keep witness in transactions. They do not lock their houses and there is no theft.”¹ Similarly, the “Zone of Peace” proposal put forward by Nepal in 1975 was endorsed by 116 countries. This does not mean that every Nepali enjoyed an equal share in power and resources. Nepal has been a caste-based society with its people divided and classified into different working or descent groups. Such a classification of society into different working groups has created a disparity in the socio-economic achievement of individuals and has deprived many Nepali from a viable decision making process. It has also restricted many individuals’ access to prestigious jobs and has compelled some groups of Nepali to exclusively carry out menial jobs. The repression of minority groups and ethnic activists occurred throughout Nepal’s history since its unification. The Limbu and Tamang repression in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and the Kirat and Tamang rebellions in the 1950s, are some examples from Nepal’s history.² The country ultimately witnessed a decade-long insurgency (1996-2006) which claimed the lives of approximately 16,000 people. These rebellions were launched by the people against different governments which introduced or supported different cultural values in the Nepalese society. This study will examine how the cultural values were supported by different governments of the past.

Initial Shah Regime (1770-1846)

Prithivi Narayan Shah, after conquering Kathmandu, shifted his capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu in 1770. The transfer of the capital brought significant changes in the elite structure throughout the central Himalayas. In the beginning, the administration was dominated by the families from Gorkha, but soon other high caste families, new elites, absorbed into the Shah Kingdom established themselves in the Shah Court.³ Their dominance resulted in the new courtier class in Kathmandu have less representation. The division within the royal family that tended to work at cross purposes made the manipulation of the royal family by the elites possible. The Brahman's role as priests and gurus to the royal and *Bhardar* family, and their monopoly on the state's legal system assured their families a prominent social status. Newars had the knowledge of administration and business from the earlier Malla regimes.⁴ These skills, which the Brahmins and Chhetris lacked, made it possible for them to obtain some good positions in the government. The other caste and ethnic families played only a minor role in the center of court politics. The kings, incarnation of Hindu God Vishnu, were obliged to delegate responsibility on a broad range of issues to social groups, castes, as a right.⁵

King Prithivinaryan Shah called Nepal, *char jat chhatris varnako sajha fulbari*, a common garden for people of four caste and 36 sub castes. This saying was negated by his other sayings and acts which led to the legacy of exclusion. He called Nepal *asli Hindustan*, a real place for Hindus, and designated Gorkhali or the *Khas Kura*, the Kings' native tongue, as the language of Nepal in the form of Nepali.⁶

Rana Regime (1846-1950)

Jung Bahadur Kunwar, chhetri family, became the Prime Minister of Nepal after the deadly Kot Massacre in 1846. His formal recognition was made by the royal order in 1856. This order bestowed on him the executive power of the state. 'Rana', an honorific title, was granted to Jung Bahadur by King Surendra in 1958. Since then, the title 'Rana' was subsequently used by the Kunwar family. Jung Bahadur established the role of succession for his family in such a way that the first male would be the Prime Minister, and the second child served as Minister and Commander in Chief of the Army. The next four would hold the commanding posts in the four military regions of Nepal and so on. The intermarriage between the Shah and Rana families was encouraged to bind together the fortunes of the families. The Ranas did not share power with other families and rejected economic development such as industrialization.⁷ Jung Bahadur Rana and his successors strengthened their position by isolating the King from the people. Jonathan Gregson in his book, *Massacre at the Palace, the Doomed Royal Dynasty of Nepal*, says, Brahmins supported this policy by advising the King not to leave the palace confines for more than 12 hours at a time and on no account, to go beyond the limits of Kathmandu.⁸

On returning to Kathmandu from his visit to Britain, Jung Bahadur Rana immediately began codifying and revising the ancient laws of Nepal and immediately made provisions for an English-style education. The *Muluki Ain*, Legal Code (1854), promulgated by Jung Bahadur Rana, was primarily based on Hindu Shastras as interpreted by the royal priest and other powerful Brahmins. Almost a third of its contents addressed caste rules and offenses.⁹ The Nepalese people were divided into four caste hierarchies: (1) *Tagaddhari* (sacred thread wearing), (2) *Matawali* (liquor drinking), (3)

Pani nachalne choi chhito halnu naparne (water unacceptable but no purification required, if touched or touchable low castes), and (4) *Pani nachalne choi chito halnu parne* (water unacceptable and purification required, if touched or untouchable low castes). This division was the basis for carrying out day to day business.

The autocratic Ranas imposed an atmosphere of isolation on its citizens, yet they lived a western lifestyle which was apparent from their palaces, vehicles, and fashion. They limited the people outside their families from accessing the resources, manpower, or freedom to improve their quality of life. The commoners were forbidden to ride on horses or elephants, wear European dress, and were required to have special permission to build a beautiful house. Durbar High School, the only school, opened in Kathmandu during the Jung Bahadur's rule. It was open only to royal and Rana family members. It opened to other families a half century after its founding.

Panchayat Regime (1960-1990)

The period after from 1951 to 1960 was the democratic period. The first general election was held in February 1959, and in May the first democratically elected government took office with B. P. Koirala as Prime Minister. The government made many reforms, but its policies were not accepted by all sections of the society and the powerful landlords viewed the land reform with alarm.¹⁰ On 15 December 1960, King Mahendra dissolved the Parliament, arrested the political leaders, and took total control of the country. The political system introduced was the *Panchayat* system. "Apologists for the system have argued that it was more indigenous and in keeping with the traditions of Nepal . . . than full blown democracy."¹¹

King Mahendra, who had been exposed to the outside world, introduced some reforms to the legal systems in 1963 and restricted discrimination and exclusion based on caste or ethnicity. The reforms could not happen within the framework of the party-less political system because high caste, advanced education, higher economic status, and identification with the Hill culture were the prerequisites to for entering into the power structure. The people comprising, Hill Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars continued dominating the power structure during the 30 years of the *Panchayat* System by occupying 90 percent of the higher administrative posts.¹² Unity of the nation was expressed in the slogan: one language, one dress, one country (*ek bhasa, ek bhash, ek desh*). The importance of 'building nationalism' was emphasized with Hinduism as the official national religion. This same phenomenon can be related to the practice of President Askar Akayev, who in 1992, identified the people of the Kyrgyz Republic uniquely with the Manas epic even though 42 percent of its citizens were of non-Kyrgyz ethnic origin.¹³

Constitutional Monarchy (1990-2005)

King Birendra who attended some of the best universities in the world, was liberal in many ways. During his coronation ceremony in 1975, he put forth the proposal to call Nepal a 'Zone of Peace.' His aim was to focus on the socio-economic development of Nepal without the need to worry about the state's territorial integrity. The referendum held in 1980 provided an opportunity for people to choose either a multiparty democracy or a reformed *panchayat*. A majority of Nepali voters favored a reformed *panchayat*. His respect for the people led him to agree to a multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarch. The departure from the traditional absolute monarchy made him very popular.

The Constitution promulgated in 1990, recognized Nepal as a country with diverse cultures, religions, and geography, but also continued to designate Nepal as a Hindu Kingdom. This reality kept diverse cultures and local languages from flourishing. The cow, *simrik* (red color), *danphe* (lophophorus), and *laliguras* (rhododendron) which are typical symbols of the Hindi religion, and of the Hill continued as national symbols. *Daura suruwal* which remained as the national dress was also typical of Hill Nepalis.

Major Incidents of Nepal

The major incidents of Nepal that changed the landscape of Nepalese politics were the Anti-Rana Movement (1950-1951), the Peoples Movement of 1990, and Maoist Movement (1996-2006). These movements subsequently brought political and social awareness to the people but the rights of all individual irrespective of caste, gender and ethnicity has not yet been realized in Nepal.

The Anti-Rana Movement

On the morning of 4 November 1950 a secret convoy, comprising the royal family, pulled out of the palace gate to take asylum in the Indian Embassy.¹⁴ The embattled Rana regime formally ousted the King, Tribhuvan, and placed Prince Gyanendra, the king's younger grandson, on the throne of Nepal. After four days, the royal family boarded an Indian Air Force plane to fly to New Delhi.¹⁵ Meanwhile, pro-democracy guerrillas based in India crossed over into Nepal and sought several skirmishes against the troops loyal to the Ranas. There were a series of mass demonstrations around Kathmandu demanding King Tribhuwan to be reinstated as the rightful monarch. On 7 February 1951, Delhi brokered a peace agreement called the

Delhi Compromise, between King Tribhuvan, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress. Under this arrangement, the King's power was restored. The Ranas and the Nepali Congress were to form an interim government to hold an election to a constituent assembly by the end of 1952.¹⁶ The constituent assembly election, which was to be a major political agenda for the Maoists, was only held for the first time in 2008.

Under the Rana Regime, the ultimate limit of *afno manchhe* flourished. Chandra Shamsher Rana, after becoming Prime Minister, modified the rolls of succession identifying three levels. "A" class Ranas comprised the direct legitimate offspring of Ranas, who could dine with a high caste family. "B" class consisted of the off springs of a second wife who could dine with a high class family but not share boiled rice with them. "C" class Ranas included the off springs of wives and concubines of lower status, with whom there would be no dining. This classification had a cascading effect on the role in government. "A" class Ranas would hold the highest posts in administration and the military; whereas the other two classes would be denied any rank above colonel and would never become Prime Minister of Nepal.¹⁷

The anti-Rana movement began as early as 1936 with the formation of *Nepal Praja Parishad*, the Nepal People Council.¹⁸ Rana rulers quickly crushed the movement but created anti-Rana sentiments in the population as the people outside their family were denied even the most basic civil rights. Subsequently, the Ranas could not overcome the overwhelming confrontation by the King, the Nepali Congress and the people. Additionally, the situation became untenable for the Ranas when there was no support from within the Rana family. "C" class Ranas refused to cooperate and even led troops to mutiny.¹⁹ The international situation was not favorable for the Ranas either. The

independence of India from Great Britain in 1947 caused the Rana regime to lose Indian support. In fact, the support shifted towards anti-Rana activists.²⁰

The Movement of 1990

The attempt to install multiparty democracy by means of ballot failed when the results of the referendum went in favor of the Panchayat and not to multi-party democracy. The announcement of the referendum was the result of the movement initiated by students and supported by other segments of the population. A decade later a major revolution was launched by the parties. The Joint Mass Movement, led by the Nepali Congress and some factions of the communist party (United Left Front) with sporadic violence in the capital and other cities of Nepal, eventually forced the King to concede power to people.

The Mass Movement of 1990, popularly known as *Jana Andolan I*, was not caused by any single major factor. Rather, it involved the interplay of several important factors. One of the significant aspects of the movement was the ethnic dimension most evident in new uprisings in the Kathmandu Valley.²¹ This movement gave some strength to the organizations that feebly rebelled against the high-caste Hindu elites in the past. Political consciousness in the minority groups grew. In the late 1980s, the middle class, though still small in size, gradually began to emerge. The educated and modern outlook of the masses matched the motives of the outlawed political parties and gave strength to a popular movement against the Panchayat Regime.²²

The *afno manchhe* feeling continued after the demise of Rana rulers. *Afno manchhe* was institutionalized with the introduction of the Panchayat Regime by the King in 1960. People of high caste, advanced education, higher economic status, and

identification with the Hill culture comprised the *afno manchhe*. At that time there was a saying, *Sabai Nepali Pancha sabai Pancha Nepali*, every Nepali is a Pancha and every Pancha is a Nepali, yet not everyone had the opportunity or access to a decision making role.

The Maoist Movement

On 13 February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) initiated its armed struggle, Protracted People's War, against the Nepalese government with simultaneous attacks in different parts of the country. The insurgency gained a greater momentum when the group successfully launched a surprise attack in an Army barracks in Dang in the mid-western region of the country on 23 November 2001. The insurgents controlled most of the rural area, where the ruling government of Nepal was limited to the cities and district headquarters. Over 16,000 people lost their lives in this insurgency. Eventually, the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance on 21 November 2006.²³ The Accord pledged progressive restructuring of the state by resolving prevailing problems related to class, ethnicity, region, and gender differences.²⁴

The political, social, economic, and geographical conditions were all conducive for the Maoist movement. No unity prevailed between the anti- Maoist organizations. Nepal saw 12 changes of government between 1991 and 2002 which led to unstable politics at the center of the government. The numerous changes in government hindered effective development of the country and not any consistent government policy to deal with the rebels could be produced. The contentious politics in Kathmandu reinforced the Maoists' argument that parliamentary democracy was not good for Nepal but

communism was. International relations deteriorated and unity of the state further collapsed when King Gyanendra took control in February 2005 and appointed some ill-famed leaders from the old Panchayat Regime to his cabinet.

The Maoist insurgency was a well-orchestrated event. In the communist tradition, they carried out a thorough study of the situation and devised a strategy to concur. Maoists initially established themselves in the Kham Magar area of mid-western Nepal, for three main reasons: the presence of a forest which facilitated guerrilla operations, poor economic conditions, and people perceived as naïve that could easily be swayed to perform their duties until death.²⁵ “Magars are also renowned for their martial prowess. Six among the thirteen Gurkhas, decorated with Britain’s highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross, are Magars.”²⁶ Within a few years of their armed struggle, the Maoist presence was felt in all parts of the country in all the ethnic groups and thus, became quite a formidable organization.

The main reasons for the conflict in Nepal were the systematic structural violence where inequality, suppression, and exploitation are built into the fundamental structures prevalent in the society. Timothy Kreuttner says, “Nepal, an ethnically diverse country, is an example of a state that failed to adequately address socio-cultural problems, and thus, ultimately providing a fertile breeding ground for a Maoist insurgency.”²⁷ Nepal indeed was in such a grave situation after 1992, that two western scholars, Andrew Nickson and Stephen Mikesell, who were cognizant of the historic neglect of rural communities in Nepal, could predict the Shining path-like Maoist insurgency to take root in Nepal.²⁸

Robert J. Schexnayder points out that, the insurgency in Nepal was an egalitarian movement. It was a communist insurgency that was attempting to overthrow the

government, and create social changes, one of their many goals being the removal of the caste system²⁹ The Maoist party took advantage of the dissatisfied woman, *dalits*, and tribal people in the Hill areas.³⁰ The Maoists also took on their side the people in the hinterland, who for centuries suffered oppression through the decision of the high-caste urban elites in Kathmandu.³¹

The Maoists claimed to fight against the chauvinism inherent in the Hindu caste.³² In order to garner support from the people, the Maoists established self-proclaimed autonomous areas representing both region and ethnicity. This helped them to push their movement forward. Together with the politicization of ethnicity, people were increasingly aware of their ethnicity and began to take part in various ethnic mobilizations.³³ Nepali women's involvement in the insurgency brought a major break to the social fabric of rural areas. It was reported that one third of the guerrillas were women, and about three quarters were from indigenous ethnic communities. The females, who joined the Maoists, wore combat dress, discarded jewelry, and had their hair cut short. Maoist females spoke of liberation and systematically subverted the discriminatory Hindu traditions.³⁴

Maoists were successful because they raised those issues which had long been grievances of a majority of the population. Political consciousness of the minority groups and social awareness in women and *dalits*, assisted them in fighting for their cause. The Maoist insurgency brought awareness of social discrimination; however, most of the positive changes in social relations are symbolic in nature and are not yet part of the fabric of social relations. Maoist insurgency, despite some positive changes also created social disharmony and established a precedent for, weapons as a means of solution.³⁵

The Royal Carnage

On the evening of 1 June 2001, during a family gathering, 10 core members of Nepal's royal family were massacred. The report of the investigation commission that was formed to examine the incident, revealed that Crown Prince Dipendra opened fire with an automatic weapon inside the royal palace during the family gathering, killing his parents, his siblings, five other close relatives, and ultimately himself. The report, released to the general public in a televised program, was received with great suspicion by the general public.

This incident is a clear indication of the Nepalese society's reluctance to change its culture. The incident is said to be the result of a family struggle to bridge the gap between ancient traditions and contemporary thinking.³⁶ Prince Dipendra, was warned that he would be stripped of both his royal titles and his financial allowance if he persisted in disobeying his parents and married Devyani. The Prince lost his senses because he was caught up in the desire of his love for Devyani and violated the restrictions imposed by his parents. This ultimately led to the carnage when he failed to change the decisions made by his parents.

The other aspect that can be related to this incident is the culture of violence that has been practiced to obtain power in Nepal. Nepalese, even after more than a decade, do not believe that the Prince acted alone. They sense foul play. "In a country whose history is so littered with real conspiracies, it is second nature to be extremely reluctant to accept anything at face value."³⁷

The Major Issues

Caste, gender and ethnicity are the major issues which are of a great concern in Nepal as they have been the major causes of conflict. The political culture, corruption, and the rise of political parties are the other important issues to examine in the Nepalese culture.

The Caste Discrimination

The caste system is deeply rooted in Nepali society. The Mallas who began ruling the country in the 13th century, though Hindu, were tolerant of the other major religion, Buddhism, but were strict on enforcing the caste system.³⁸ The situation continued in that fashion for quite some time and is still like that to a large extent. The Bhramin informed the people that the King, Rana Bahadur Shah, had become mad when he proposed a common feast for people of all caste during the opening ceremony of the temple in Tundikhel, Kathmandu.³⁹

After two centuries, the situation remains pretty much the same. In late 2011, Karna Bahadur Nepali, the Dalit headmaster of a Ghandruk primary school, had his face smeared with soot for suggesting that *Dalits* be allowed to join together for a village party to celebrate the installation of a potable water project.⁴⁰ It is very unfortunate to have such an incident at Ghandruk, a Gurung village en route to the famous Annapurna trek route, one of the most exposed areas to the outside world. "This event is also one of the greatest ironies of Nepal as practices for which *Janajatis*, indigenous ethnic people blame the 'upper castes', are still very much practiced among themselves."⁴¹

There are many recent incidents which show caste discrimination in Nepal. In October 2010, Santamaya Syangtan of Makwanpur abused Sapana Khatri for touching her

water. In another incident, Bir Bahadur Pun and his wife, Amrita Biswokarma, of Jajarkot who had met and married in India were not accepted at Bir Bahadur's home. In April 2011, Shrawan Kumar Shrestha of Parbat and Amrita BK of Baglung committed suicide when Shrawan's family was not willing to accept Amrita. In June 2011, after her marriage to Manik Kumar Biswokarma, Angila Limbu's father performed the last rites of his daughter as per Limbu tradition because to him she was as good as dead to the family.⁴²

The word 'caste' appears 121 times in the draft Constitution proposed by the Maoists in 2010, an average of one on every page. The Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Offense and Punishment Act was promulgated on 24 May 2011.⁴³ On 16 September 2011, President Ram Baran Yadav launched a 100-day campaign to end racial discrimination and untouchability in the country. The slogan for the campaign was "I commit to end caste discrimination and untouchability."⁴⁴ These are clear indications that the caste issue is not just a thing of the past, but still a major concern for future. "Caste discrimination is a root cause and an insidious consequence of the civil war in Nepal. The conflict will remain unresolved without a sustained commitment to end caste-based abuses."⁴⁵

Gender Discrimination

Women still face discrimination at home and in the society. At least nine women were killed by their husbands in the period of a month, mid-April to mid-May 2012. Out of a total of 105 reported cases of incidents involving women victims, comprising 53 cases of domestic violence, 38 were from their husbands, and 20 from the society during the same month.⁴⁶

Nepal is a patriarchal society where people value the birth of a boy more than the birth of a girl. There is a traditional belief that it is only boys who can perform funeral rites and deliverance to the passed ancestors.⁴⁷ Parents feel safe if they can marry their daughters at a young age.⁴⁸ Basically the women are to take care of the children and house where as males go out earning for the family. Educating females is viewed as unnecessary.⁴⁹ In most parts of Nepal still, if a baby girl is born, the family does not welcome her wholeheartedly. They consider her a nuisance. In the hopes of getting a boy, the family will over and over again, force a woman to beget off springs.⁵⁰ One of the reasons why Queen Aishworya, did not want Prince Dipendera, to marry Devyani was the perceived knowledge, though without any medical evidence, that she was unable to bear male children.⁵¹

There is the belief that when women menstruate, they are impure and they will bring bad luck on a whole family and if they stay in the house they would contaminate everything they touch. They have to stay in a filthy shelter, known as *chhaupadi goth* with a dirt floor and no windows or running water. Recently, three women were found dead in a *chhaupadi goth* in the remote district of Achham after temperatures dropped to subzero. Similarly, a 15 year old girl died of diarrhea contracted while sleeping in a shed.⁵² In 2005, the government endorsed a law abolishing *chhaupadi*, but enforcement has been insignificant or non-existent.⁵³

The Maoists had been extremely effective recruiting women within its ranks. Many women in Nepal who were the victims of cruelty and inequality joined the Maoists to escape such treatment.⁵⁴ According to Global security.com, former female fighters were attracted to the party with the view of ending social inequities as the Maoist policy

included plans for cultural reform to end discrimination in caste, ethnicity and gender. They hoped to change the old traditional culture into one that respects equal rights of women, but to their dismay, ex-fighters are now confronted with the expectations that they will once again assume submissive household roles.⁵⁵ Gender activist Babita Basnet says, “society has hardly changed when it comes to women’s roles because women are expected to play their traditional role as merely a wife or a daughter-in-law.”⁵⁶

Nepali women have been deeply affected by the armed conflict, and, as with many other conflicts, its cause and progress had a notable gender dimension.⁵⁷ Women however did not have a direct role in the negotiation and signing of the agreements reached between the Maoists and the government, despite the important role they played during the movement which led to the end of monarchy.⁵⁸ Still today in Nepal, the decisions for women are made by men. The minister for women, children and social welfare is a male.⁵⁹ Awareness of gender equality has improved because of the Maoist Movement, however, a serious dent in the structural violence that persists in most parts of Nepal is yet to be made.⁶⁰

Ethnic Discrimination

The ethnic communities have been suffering discrimination since long ago. The Shah rulers did not accord rights and status to different ethnic groups and communities. “Nepali rulers deliberately kept various communities isolated and underdeveloped.”⁶¹ “Land was taken away from the tribal landlords under the *Kipat* land system and was redistributed to Brahmins and Chhetris under the *Raikar*, *Birata*, *guthi* and *jagir* systems.”⁶²

Politicization of the ethnic group was one of the main factors from which the Maoists gained much of their strength. Prachanda, leader of the Maoist party, during the insurgency, suggested that the country be divided into nine autonomous regions, six based on ethnicity and the remaining three based on territory.⁶³

In December 2011, the cabinet decided to start recruitment of 3,000 youths from different Madhesi communities to form a separate unit for inclusiveness in the Nepal Army.⁶⁴ This move was not allowed to take effect because of the objections from different political parties.

Ethnicity is seen as a clear fault line for the future prosperity of Nepal. At this point, the country is divided when it comes to federating the states on the basis of ethnicity. On 18 May 2012, in response to the strikes, the government addressed the demands of Arya Khas to not federate the country based on ethnicity and language.⁶⁵ Similarly, after three weeks, the *bandh*, shut down strike, was called off on 17 May 2012 when the three major parties assured the protestors would address the Undivided Far West Movement.⁶⁶ Six days after the agreement between the Arya Khas and the people of Far Wes, not to federate the country on the basis of identity, the government guaranteed identity-based federalism to the indigenous nationalities and called on them to withdraw all protest programs. The failure to arrive at a consensus on the federal structure of the country resulted in the inability to draft a constitution for the country. This was the main reason that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved after their deadline expired on 28 May 2012.

Whether or not to determine federalism of the country on the basis of ethnicity could be a matter of big debate. It may also be necessary to make the decision by

referendum. What is clear is that the concerns of ethnic people are not yet realized. One common feeling of ethnic people is:

You have all our blood, sweat and tears to establish our identity. We will give all it takes to fight against grave injustice. Be aware, it will begin from Kathmandu Valley, You party leaders from four parties failed to see that we janajatis have . . . right to self-determination to our historic place. This will be history that Nepal has never seen.⁶⁷

Political Culture

Nepal was traditionally ruled by the highly centralized, authoritarian and personalized political system of the Shah Kings and the Rana Prime Ministers. Allegiance to the ruler was a precondition for entering into the power structure. However, for any such allegiance it was necessary that the person belonged to higher castes and the Hill culture. It eventually gave way to a system of patronage with zero tolerance for dissent or opposition.⁶⁸ The process of gradual democratization took place in 1951. Nevertheless, the democratic elite proved unable to neutralize the political role of the traditional elite.⁶⁹ Nepal's modern political forces have not been able to inculcate liberal democratic values in the society and there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to show that the political culture has undergone a change despite several democratic practices introduced since the mid-twentieth century.

Some unholy alliances have been formed simply for gaining power. The Nepali Congress Party and the United Marxist Leninist Party ignored their respective roles that might have ushered in political change in the 1990s. These two parties, forming a government with individual leaders from the authoritarian era as their prime minister, is something that the general public did not comprehend. This political reality failed to

represent coalition politics. Barbara Adams, in the book, *Nepal Crisis Unlimited*, *Reflections from the Crucial Years* termed it, collective political blackmail.⁷⁰

Leaders have not been supportive in electing Prime Ministers from their own party. In turn, Prime Ministers have detached themselves from their original party and established their own party.⁷¹ Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala could not continue in his position because he lost the support of 36 members of Parliament from his own party. Subsequently, Girija Prasad Koirala did not support Krishna Prasad Bhattarai when the latter became Prime Minister. Similarly, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal did not receive support from his party chairman, Jhalanath Khanal; and Baburam Bhattarai has been facing strong criticism of his colleague, Mohan Baidhya. Such issues of opposition from their own party members are a regular phenomenon in Nepali politics. Backbiting and internal squabbles have led to a pseudo unity in almost all the political parties of Nepal.

Corruption

No transaction is possible, either in or out of government, without a bribe.⁷² Some rare events of conviction with respect to corruption have been seen in past few months. A former minister, Chiranjivi Wagle and the then sitting Minister, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta, among others have been imprisoned for corruption. Similarly Sarita Giri, another minister, was discharged for her misdeeds. However, no one seems to be deterred from being involved in corruption. Recently, Minister of State for Information and Communications, Surita Kumari Shah, demanded 50 million Nepalese Rupees in bribes from Ncell, the country's leading private telecom operator.⁷³ Corruption is deeply imbedded and consistently practiced by the government officials and ministers.

The Rise of Political Parties

The use of violence to obtain power has been a long tradition of Nepal. Even during the unification campaign, Prithvi Narayan Shah's troops carried out violence in different parts of the country. Examples include the deplorable act of cutting off noses and lips of people in Kritipur.⁷⁴ On the evening of 15 September 1846, along with many ordinary soldiers, more than 30 members of Nepal's aristocracy were killed.⁷⁵ This incident known as *Kot Parva* brought Junga Bahadur Kunwar into power. Series of such violences were seen in the history of Nepal. The noteworthy fact is that all the major political parties of Nepal resorted to violence at certain points in time.

The first and largest political party to rule the country, Nepali Congress, resorted to violence. During its struggle, if people were to be cursed, the local people would say *Kala Kangress*, ruthless Congress, shall enter your house. Another party to rule the country was the Nepal Communist Party United Marxist Leninist. Many of the high profile leaders of that party received credit for the violence they perpetrated in Jhapa, in Eastern Nepal, in 1967.⁷⁶ Maoists used violence during 1996 to 2006 to topple the central government and ultimately emerged as the biggest party. The other prominent party that hails from Terai, Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum, which has been part of several coalition governments, became popular after 2006 through violence in Terai.

The Communist Party of Nepal, United Marxist Leninist was the biggest Parliamentary Party in Nepal in 1994. It gained this popularity as it raised the issue of caste, class, gender, etc. After 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) became very popular within a few years by raising mostly the same issues that the earlier communist party had raised, yet with a much greater voice. Similarly, the first party in Terai to be

somewhat popular was the Nepal Sadhbhawana Party. This party, formed in 1990, from Nepal Sadhbhawana council, raised the issues of Madheshi people, inhabitants of Terai. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, another party, later raised the same issues of Madhesi people with a much louder voice, of course with violence, and soon became a potent force in Nepali politics after the election of Constituent Assembly in 2008.

The Trend of Violence

In Nepal, though the ethnic violence is not new, the level and frequency of such violence has increased dramatically. Ethnic violence in the last two decades (1990-2010) has surpassed those in the four decades between 1951 and 1990, both in number and magnitude.⁷⁷ Data on killings by ethnic organizations show that the Madhesi Organisations are involved in most killings, followed by Hindu organizations, and indigenous organizations respectively. The killings by ethnic organizations reached a high of 109 in 2007 and they continued at between 25 to 30 in 2009 and 2010.⁷⁸

Nepal's Muslim minority has been attacked for a long time but the Hindu-Muslim riots, which were mostly confined to the Terai, spread to Kathmandu and other parts of the country. Christians have become the victims of violence since 2006. One such example was the bombing of a Catholic Church in Kathmandu in May 2009. In that incident two people died and about a dozen others sustained injuries.⁷⁹

Violent modes of protest programs are popular these days. *Bandh* (shutdowns), *chakka-jam* (traffic blockades), *masal julus* (torch-lit processions) and *dharna* (sit-ins) have become very common among all the groups ranging from political parties, identity movements, students, teachers, transportation owners, petroleum dealers, trade unions, and even among locals along the highway demanding compensation after a traffic

incident. In January 2012, the local people in the Banke district closed down Nepalgunj-based customs office demanding endorsement of a bill from the Parliament to establish a university in Nepalgunj.⁸⁰ All the political parties called for closure of, *Sadak* and *sadan*, road and Parliament, even for a minor occurrence. The *Bandh* culture is being encouraged as the initial decisions are often immature and institutions comply with the demands of agitators after they carry out such programs. One recent example is the induction of a dalit representative into the State Restructuring Commission following a warning by dalit lawmakers to obstruct the House Proceedings for not including any dalit representative in the commission.⁸¹

The major causes of insecurity these days as cited by National Business Initiative are: (1) political interference in the functioning of security and judiciary agencies; (2) lack of viable economic opportunities causing young people to be engaged in criminal or political groups that promise economic gain; (3) increasing political mobilization of people along identity lines that involve attacks against public and private property; and (5) violence between identity groups.⁸² “The District Development Committee tendering process is seen as a key trigger of localized violence, particularly between youth wings of political parties.”⁸³

Summary

The cultural values with respect to caste gender and ethnicity have restricted the overall socio-economic development of the country, and instigated violence towards women, dalits and ethnic groups. Certain cultural values were imposed by the authoritarian regimes and some were continued through feudal rules. The cultural values which are deeply rooted in the society still exist to a significant degree in most parts of

the country. Some cultural changes that occurred through armed struggle were not sustainable because of the lack of socio-economic development.

“Multiculturalism and democracy are closely interlinked. It is only within the framework of a democratic polity that multiculturalism may flourish.”⁸⁴ Political culture in Nepal has never been good, thus, it had a cascading effect of poor multiculturalism. The 1950 and 1990 movements could not bring any significant change in the culture of the country, and in both the cases, the result rested around safeguarding the interest of the traditional elites.⁸⁵ Even after 2008, the situation has not improved. Moreover, the increased expectations of people, minimum access to economic activities, poor infrastructure that results in isolation, and deprivation from social services can lead to rise in violence.⁸⁶

Some of the practices that were carried out to topple the existing regime have established the precedent for the future. The *bandh* culture has complemented the culture of *chakari* and corruption. The culture of *afno manchhe* has proved stronger than ever before. It is a common norm among ethnic groups, and is also evident in all the political parties. Formation of factions, *afno manchhe*, within a political party is practiced to secure *kurchi* or *jagir*. There are Prachanda panels and Bidhya panels within the Maoist party; Jhalanath panels and Oli panels in the communist party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist; and Koirala panels and Deuba panels within the Nepali Congress. All types of negative actions have been practiced to secure *kurchi*. For example, the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum disintegrated many times, breaking away from the party to join the government of another party. If not managed properly, conflict between ethnic groups and among the factions within the political party is imminent. Some symptoms of

impending conflict were witnessed in the cantonments of the Maoists combatants between the factions of Prachanda and Baidhya, which led to the early handover of the Maoist cantonments to the Nepal Army. To a large extent, the country still witnesses discrimination with respect to caste, gender and ethnicity. If discriminating culture, exemplified by the caste system, continues then it would encourage some elites to use the 'revolt card' in name of Cultural Revolution.

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⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹CNN.com, “2 killed in Nepal Church Bombing,” 23 May 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/23/nepal.church.blast/> (accessed 10 December 2011).

⁸⁰Nepalnews.com, “Locals Bring Nepalgunj Customs Office to Halt,” 4 January 2012, <http://www.nepalnews.com/home/index.php/news/19/15753-locals-bring-nepalgunj-customs-office-to-halt.html//> (accessed 4 January 2012).

⁸¹Nepalnews.com, “Big Three Agree to Induct a Dalit Member in SRC,” 24 November 2012, <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2011/nov/nov24/news16.php/> (accessed 23 December 2011).

⁸²National Business Initiative, “Business and Public Security in Nepal, Impacts and Responses,” March 2010, http://nbinepal.org.np/publications/4470_NBI+Alert_Nepal_business+security_briefing_March_10.pdf/ (accessed 10 December 2011), 2-22.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., 4-5.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Shahid Parwez, “An Empirical Analysis of the Conflict In Nepal,” Asia Development Bank, July 2006, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2006/wp7.pdf/> (accessed 10 December 2011), 6.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Nepal, a multi-ethnic and multilingual country, is rich in a variety of cultures. Traditionally, Nepal's social relationships have been and continue to be, dominated by the caste system. The caste system has divided the society into social hierarchies where individuals at different levels, are expected to perform certain prescribed jobs. Brahmins, at the top of the hierarchy, do not perform physical labor but live a respectful and affluent life from *dan* (charity), which people offer to them. Providing charity to Brahmins is believed to be a means to get rid of *pap* (sin), and *dasha* (ill fate), and also a means leading to a peaceful existence even after death. The *Sudras*, individuals lowest in the social hierarchy, and considered *achhut* (untouchables), are expected to perform menial jobs, provide labor, make utensils, and offer services through manual work, to higher castes.

The elites, generally from Brahmin and Chhetri families, consider themselves superior to the majority of the population. *Jagir* (a salaried job), where one receives pay without working, identifies with the non-work ideals of Brahmin. The *chakari* (unhealthy service), and *afno manchhe* (our people) are two complementary practices imbedded in the vertical and horizontal axis respectively, to acquire a position, secure it, and gain promotion. *Chakari* conveys the expectation by the elites that others perform all day-to-day functions. *Karma* (fatalism), the belief, no one has personal control over one's life but god, has been obstructing the progressive development of an individual, and the society as a whole.

The Indo Aryans ethnic group has been dominant in Nepal among its three major ethnic groups. The other ethnic groups, the Mongoloids, and the Austro-Asiatic, relatively early settlers in Nepal, have traditionally been denied opportunities by high caste Hindu elites belonging to the Indo Aryan group. The ethnic identity of the Nepali citizen becomes apparent from their dress, language, habits, and facial features. The issue, *afno manchhe*, because of ethnic identity, has been a major determining factor for a family's social position and is dominant in other issues such as one's choice of a marriage partner, friends, and job opportunities.

Nepal was ruled for nearly two and a half centuries by the highly centralized, authoritarian, and personalized political system of the Shah Kings and the Rana Prime Ministers. Soon after Prithivi Narayan Shah shifted his capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu in 1770, elites, high cast Hindus, established themselves in the Shah Court. The Brahman's role as priests, and gurus and their monopoly on the state's legal system assured their families of a prominent social status. Some Newars, having the knowledge of administration and business from the earlier Malla regimes, also occupied important positions. Other elites had no role in central government. The Rana regime (1846-1950) exercised the ultimate practice of exclusion. The aristocrat Rana family led an exotic lifestyle, whereas other people outside their family, were denied even basic needs. Panchayat system, party-less political system, introduced in 1960 also harbored only certain groups of people. The move to increase agricultural land by the occupation of land in the Terai gave rise to the hegemony of the high caste-Hill elites over the population in the Terai. Nepali, the language of the Hill people was recognized as the national language and the language of instruction. The national emblem cow, *simrik* (red

color), *lalgurans* (rhododendron) *danfe* (lophophorus), and national dress *daura surwal* (a typical shirt and trousers), were characteristics of Hindu culture and Hill areas. A new legal code promulgated in 1963, which replaced the Muluki Ain of 1854 enacted by the Ranas, could not abolish the caste system. The constitution of Nepal as late as 1990, defined Nepal as a Hindu kingdom. Though the 1990 constitution recognized Nepal as a multi-ethnic country, it did not provide any space in the power structure to the indigenous ethnic people.

In the past, and even up to the last decade of the 20th century, Nepal was a country closed to the outside world. To a great extent, the society followed Hindu beliefs and Hindu cultural practices. The media were mostly controlled by the state. The majority of the people born to lower castes, and indigenous ethnic people were denied access to the power structure. The women were leading a discriminatory life.

The political change of 1990, absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, brought much freedom to Nepali people. The influx of hundreds of international non-governmental organizations and the mushrooming of media houses did a lot to create awareness in people. The aspirations of the people, however, could not be managed by the government. The legacy of exclusion continued. Corruption was rampant. The governments were short lived and more concerned about safeguarding their own position rather than fostering a broad socio-economic development. The country experienced a violent Maoist insurgency (1996-2006) that claimed the lives of some 16,000 people.

The success of the Maoist insurgency in gaining popular support, especially rested in their capability to influence, and win over, *dalits*-low caste people, marginalized ethnic groups, and women for their cause. The attraction of women and *dalits*, to insurgency,

was the result of the suppression they had been experiencing within their everyday lives at home and within the society at large. During their movement, the Maoists slaughtered cows for meat, a heinous crime as per Hindu tradition, ate together with *dalits* without any discrimination. The girls and women, who joined the Maoists, overtly subverted the traditional culture both by peaceful influence through cultural programs and by far more coercive means. Similarly the self-proclaimed ethnic autonomous regions by the Maoists helped them boost their popular support from different ethnic groups.

On the other hand, the counterinsurgency had no moral ground. Moreover, there were no concerted governmental efforts. The insurgency was initially primarily characterized as a law and order problem. The repressive moves by the security forces proved counterproductive. There was no unified effort and responsibility was more or less left to the existing security forces—the Police and the Army. There was a lack of an overall strategy to address the cultural, political and economic issues with supportive military operations. The divisions that appeared in the anti-insurgent organizations and the loss of faith in the government rendered the state incapable of defeating the insurgents outright.

Even today, the practices, such as *afno manchhe*, and *chakari* continue to exist in political parties, and are evident from the factionalism existing in them. Similarly, transparency and meritocracy is yet to be institutionalized in Nepal. Almost all institutions have been politicized and either *afno manchhe* or *chakari* is required for initiating any action. Presently, a distinct activity, practiced by everybody is the *Bandh* (strike) culture-detrimental to economic development and sustainable peace. Many Nepali believe that the Maoists won influence through violence, thus, traditionally

marginalized groups have been encouraged to adopt the same tactic. The rise of the major political parties in Nepal also provides for the legacy of violence to simply gain popularity. A political culture, devoid of corruption, has not been developed in Nepal despite the democratic initiatives of the 1950s, 1990s, and after 2006. Thus, because of a poor political culture, multiculturalism has not been flourishing in Nepal. At this time, the country failed in the process of federal structuring which added to the contentious issue of ethnic identity. It is a concern for most Nepali, that the federalism should in no way hold the value of *afno manchhe* for any particular group of people but for all citizens of the country.

The different political changes, education and social interactions have brought the increased political involvement of *dalits*, women, and ethnic people. The victims have become more aware and are concerned about their rights. Unfortunately, cultural change with respect to caste, gender and ethnicity has not been very evident. The changes that came about by the barrel of the gun, the armed struggle of the Maoists, were not sustainable because of the lack of socio-economic development and the deep rooted traditions. *Dalits* who abstained from performing traditional jobs during the Maoist insurgency had to revert back to menial labor for their survival. The cases of discrimination because of caste are still rampant. The women are still expected to do submissive household work and face discrimination at home, and in the society. The issue of ethnic autonomy, instigated by the Maoists during their campaign, remains unrealized, and is an argumentative issue. Nepal, where the precedent of violence has been established to become a powerful leader and a powerful party by raising the issues

of discrimination, provides enough maneuver space for some elites to initiate a revolt due to the existing situation of caste, gender and ethnicity

Recommendation

The first task of a functional and viable democratic government is to modulate change and any such change should be congruent with existing national norms. National mobilization and an awareness campaign is necessary for any social change so that no individual would be deprived of his or her basic rights because of his or her caste, ethnicity, and gender. In fact everyone should be taken as a Nepali citizen rather than as a member of some caste or ethnicity. The constitution, laws and policies should be enacted to end all forms of discrimination and inclusive participation in leadership and decision making positions be practiced. Everyone, of all caste, gender, and ethnicity should be mainstreamed and institutionalized within the political parties both at a local and national level. *Dalits* too, must contribute in reforming the society by their active participation, increasing social awareness and esteem among and between themselves.

National unity and harmony among people of all ethnicities should be the top priority while forming the federal states. Federalism should not create enmity among people inciting intrastate or ethnic conflict which could lead to the disintegration of the country as a whole. The value, 'country first', should be inculcated in all the people. A national consensus on foreign affairs should be sought keeping in mind the welfare and services to the people. Any ultranationalist feeling, however, should be discouraged when it deprives the opportunity for socio economic development of the country. Poor socio-economic conditions always provide room and cause for conflict

India and China, Nepal's two immediate neighbors, have witnessed rapid economic growth within a short time. Nepal should be able to exploit the geo-political advantages of being in between these two emerging powers. Political stability is a prerequisite for such exploitation to prosper economically. A coalition governance culture, and a people's welfare centered democratic polity, and efficient and merit-based bureaucracy, should be the working policy of the government.

Rule of Law should be emphasized. Law enforcement agencies should be kept away from politics. The police force should be well sensitized, and the public made aware of the importance of rule of law. Political parties should not interfere with law and order or encourage any culture of impunity. Violent youth political entities should be discouraged in all political parties.

An honest, transparent political culture should be encouraged. Political parties should develop democratic practices inside the party itself. Responsibilities should be given based on capability. Attitudes to create factionalism for opportunistic aims should be discouraged. Opposition parties should be supportive of the ruling party and not just oppose every move made by the government. Similarly, the ruling party should listen to positive criticism by the opposition and not ignore it outright. Schools, industries, and institutions should not be unnecessarily politicized and should be kept apart from politics.

Bureaucrats need to be service oriented, competent, accountable and transparent. They should have the courage to say, 'no', to the evil intensions of the politicians. Moreover, they should be fully respectful to the individual tax-payers. The perception, the general public is not just a client but also their master, should be encouraged.

Regional, ethnic and religious politics should be discouraged. Nationalistic ideals should be promoted so that feelings such as: ‘one Madhesh, one Pradesh’ to Madhesi, ‘Limbuwan’ to Limbu or an ‘Undivided Far West’ to the people in far-western Nepal, would disappear. A united, democratic Madhesi Front should be encouraged to organize their party structure beyond Madhes. Rather, the Chure Bhawar Rastriya Party should be constituted as a Nepal Rastriya Party. Similarly, Kirat Workers Party should serve broadly as Nepal’s Workers Party.

A skills-based education system must be given priority, so that people can be engaged in income generating activities and can contribute to the growth of the national economy. Policies conducive to foreign and private investments need to be adopted to stimulate and contribute to overall economic growth. Broad-based economic growth has to include all regions and social groups, irrespective of caste, ethnicity, and religious affiliations, in order to eliminate conflict. There should be equal development throughout Nepal. Minority citizens in the hinterland should have the political representation they deserve and the development policies should be formulated in consultation with local population.

People should be discouraged from carrying out protests by calling *bandh*, *masal julus*, and so on. A group calling *bandh* should be heavily condemned by the general public. The Nepali public should defy such *bandhs* and the government should provide adequate protection and compensation in case of any damage. If necessary a bill has to be passed by the Parliament that would restrict carrying out such counterproductive *bandh*. A protest, if necessary, should be carried out only in a peaceful way and the government should take prompt and appropriate action to address any concern. As Gandhi said, we

should object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary.

Corruption is the biggest illness of the country so it has to be dealt with seriously and consistently. Tougher laws should be introduced to curb corruption. In the meantime adequate payment should be provided to employees. Public awareness should be created and the corrupt person should be outcast. Anti-corruption campaigns should be launched both from community upwards and from the office of prime minister downwards.

If there has to be a fight then there should be a clear articulation of “why we fight.” No fight can be won by the security or military forces alone. National mobilization is necessary. Socio-economic and political reform must continue. The whole country should be one in isolating the insurgents. Intelligence should be given priority and leadership and other skills at all levels must be honed as per the demands of internal conflict. Only a grand, national, culturally congruent strategy that makes use of all elements of national power can create a unity of effort from all walks of life and can be expected to defeat an insurgency.

GLOSSARY

Afno manchhe. Our people, this is the distinction often made between people to people based on caste, ethnicity, religion, region, political party and faction inside the group or political party. This distinction would deny the people outside such group the opportunity to have access to jobs or decision making roles.

Annasan. Staying without eating in order to protest or to make the concerned authority heard. It is often done in public places, prison, and homes.

Bandh. This is the process of closing institutions. It is a very popular method of strike. Bandh could be to a road, town, district, region or the entire nation. Closure of entire nation is called *Nepal Bandh*, where no vehicles would be allowed ply, no shops to be opened, and no institutions to be opened.

Brahmins. People considered of high caste. This group of people would abstain from hard work and live on charity. In the past there was no capital punishment for people of this hierarchy in society. People were classified into four *varnas*, or classes: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and Shudras. They were designated different jobs based on that. Brhmins would carry out religious activities, Kshatriyas or Chhetris would join the army, Vaishyas would do business and all the Shudras were to carry out menial jobs and services.

Caste system. It is a system of social stratification which forms a basis for division of labor and puts restrictions and obligations in different tasks.

Chakari. This is an unhealthy service done to get support. It is a common practice to get things done and get jobs.

Chakka jam. Term used to organize the protest where no vehicles would be allowed to ply on road. It literally means wheel stopped. This is a very common practice for carrying out the protest.

Chaupadi goth. Literally means menstruation cattle-shed, a place where women are sent to stay alone when they are menstruating or delivering a baby.

Dalit. A name given for a group of people regarded of lower caste and thus untouchable. People of higher caste would not eat cooked food or take anything in liquid form touched by a dalit

Dashain. It is the festival of victory over evil Also known as Dashami, vijaya dashami and dashera. .It is the longest holiday season in Nepal.

Dharna. Sit in program, organized at public places or in front of office buildings in order to protest.

Ethnicity. A group of people, who identify with each other through a common heritage, a common language, a common culture, and same religion.

Jagir. A salaried job, in the past some land was given to soldiers for serving in the Army, which is valued highly in Nepal.

Kami. It is a *dalit*, performing the task of black smith.

Karma: Fete, a belief that personal life is largely controlled by external agency. The other meaning of this word is to work.

Khas kura. The language of the Gurkhas, or Parbatiya, the language of the mountains also called Gorkhali.

Kurchi. Literally means chair. The love for *kurchi* refers to unwillingness to leave the position, refers mostly to political leaders and Ministers.

Masal julus. Torch rallies (People lit fire on rugs tied to the end of the stick, and carry in mass during the night as a means of protest).

Puja. This is the worship done to deities.

Sarki. A dalit, who works as a cobbler.

Sati. The Hindu custom in which the widow was burnt along with the dead husband.

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